

**Communications Strategy
Recreation Use Fees
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Communication Strategy Recreation Use Fees

Project: Notification of recreation use fees increases.

Purpose : This strategy will define the basic messages and sequence of notifications needed to implement the fee increases into the recreation use fee program. The increase to the recreation use fee program is a Corps opportunity to communicate the benefits presented by our recreation program. Further, it demonstrates our increasing need for operations and maintenance funding. The desired outcome is effective notification of the general public, Corps officials and staff, legislative officials and interest groups.

Members of the PDT – Denver Beaulieu-Hains (202) 761-0343, CEPA; Dave Hewitt (202) 761-0289, CEPA; Judy Rice (202) 761-4751, CECW-ON; Tim Rainey (202) 761-7662, CECW-ON; and Rob Vining (202) 761- 4100, CECW-B.

Principles:

- (1) The Corps charges fees for the use of certain recreation facilities and services provided at government expense, under the authority of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. These facilities and services include campsites, boat ramps, swim beaches, specialized facilities, the issuance of special events permits, etc.
- (2) The recreation use fee program reflects a “user-pay” philosophy, which supposes that those who benefit most directly from the provision of recreation opportunities should bear a greater part of the cost for their operation and maintenance.
- (3) The revenue collected helps the Corps sustain historic levels of operation and maintenance to meet customers’ expectations.

Messages: These should be used in official, personal contacts and correspondence:

- (1) The Corps is authorized under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act to charge fees for the use of recreation facilities and services provided at government expense, to include camping, boating, etc.
- (2) The Corps fee schedules vary based on the amenities and services provided, locality of sites, and fees charged by private industry in the local area for campsites, boat ramps, swim beaches, specialized facilities, and other similar facilities and services.

- (3) Day use fees help recover a portion of the costs associated with operating and maintaining the Corps recreation facilities. Fees will increase effective January 1, 2003.
- (4) This is the first increase in day use fees since collection began eight years ago. The increase in fees is needed to compensate for increased operation and maintenance costs because of inflation.
- (5) The fee program reflects a “user-pay” philosophy, which supposes that those who benefit the most (those who use the facilities) should pay a greater portion of the costs.
- (6) All Corps projects conduct comparability studies when setting their fees each year, to assure fees are comparable to those charged by providers of similar opportunities in the local area.
- (7) The Corps is conducting an intensive review of our comparability studies to ensure that our fees do not compete unfairly with private industry. This review may result in some increases in camping fees at some locations.

Schedule of Activities

Dissemination of materials:

1 Oct - PAO and NRM communities receive full strategy for planning purposes

15 Nov - PAO and NRMO receive reminder notice

14 Nov - Congressional delegations and state and local agencies notified

15 Nov - Media release/hot topic release

1 Jan - New fees take affect

<u>Audience</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>Responsible</u>	<u>Date</u>
<u>Executive Branch</u>			
OMB	Phone call/letter	ASA (CW)	1 Oct.
Workforce			
NRM Community	Memo w/CS	DCW	1 Oct
PAO Community	Comm. Strategy	PAO/ Hot Topics	1 Oct
<u>Legislative Branch</u>			
Committees	Phone call/visit	Civil Works/ Vining	1 Oct
Key Members	Phone call/letter	DCW	1 Oct
Stakeholders	Phone call	CECW-ON	15 Nov
<u>Media</u>			
	Hot topic/press release U.S. Newswire release National Media Release	PAO	15 Nov
	Hot topic/press release	PAO	1 Jan
	Hot topic/courtesy release	PAO	16 May
<u>Public</u>			
	Routine local activities	OM's	Before Rec. Season
	Brochure	OM's	During Rec. Season

Talking Points

Recreation Use Fees

Day use fees increase at Corps recreation sites 1 January 2003.

- The Corps has reviewed recreation use fees set eight years ago and adjusted them for inflation. Recreation use fees, in general, assist the Corps in providing high quality facilities and service.
- The Corps charges fees for the use of certain recreation facilities and services provided at government expense, under the authority of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. These facilities and services include campsites, boat ramps, swim beaches, specialized facilities and special events permits.
- The recreation use fee program reflects a “user-pay” philosophy, which supposes that those who benefit most directly from the provision of recreation opportunities should bear a greater part of the cost for their operation and maintenance. The revenue collected helps the Corps sustain historic levels of operation and maintenance to meet customers’ expectations.
- Congress authorized day use fees, along with other deficit reduction measures, as part of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993.

The new fee schedule is as follows:

- A fee of \$1 per person, up to \$4 per vehicle, will be charged at developed swimming beaches, and a fee of \$3 will be charged for boat launching at ramps that have restrooms, security lighting or other recreation facilities.
- A fee of up to \$4 per vehicle may be charged for the use of all developed recreation facilities.
- An annual pass may be purchased for \$30 -- A Duplicate Annual Pass may be purchased for \$15. (An annual pass allows the permit holder and accompanying passengers to use all day use facilities without further charges, for the calendar year.)
- Golden Age and Golden Access passports will be honored. Holders will receive a 50% discount on all day use fees, including the annual pass.
- No fee will be charged for children 12 years of age or younger.
- Wayside exhibits, overlook areas, toilet facilities, picnic tables, general visitor information areas and visitor centers remain free-of-charge.

-- The basic fee for issuing a special events permit is \$50. The Corps is considering additional changes to policy and fee schedule for special events.

-- The fee program reflects a “user-pay” philosophy, which supposes that those who benefit most directly from the recreation opportunities should pay a greater share of the cost to provide them.

-- The revenue collected helps the Corps sustain historic levels of operation and maintenance to meet customer demands.

Questions and Answers

Q1: Why does the Corps charge recreation use fees?

A1: The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act provides the authority to charge use fees for recreation facilities and services provided at government expense. The Corps has charged fees for camping, the use of specialized facilities, and special event permits since the 1970s. Legislation to reduce the budget deficit, enacted in the mid-1990s, authorized the Corps to begin collecting day use fees. The collection of recreation use fees allows the Corps to recover a portion of the costs associated with operating and maintaining recreation opportunities at Corps parks.

Q3: The Corps is raising fees for the use of recreation facilities and services on public land. Is this a standard practice?

A3: Yes, each of the federal agencies that provide recreation opportunities charges entrance and/or use fees. It is standard practice to review and revise fee schedules periodically to assure statutory requirements and program goals are met.

Q4: How do the fees the Corps charges compare to other agencies' fees?

A4: All Corps sites conduct comparability studies when setting their fees, to assure Corps fees are comparable to those charged by other recreation providers for similar services within the local area.

Q5: Who makes the decisions about how much to charge and when to increase?

A5: Comparability studies are conducted at the local level, and the resulting fee schedules are approved by higher Corps authority. Congress established the original criteria for day use fees eight years ago, which included a cap of \$3 per vehicle per day. The legislation included authority to adjust day use fees as necessary, in accordance with the CPI.

Q7: Are there any new recreation sites that weren't charging fees before that will now be charging? Where are they?

A7: Not as a direct result of this fee increase. Local offices determine where they will charge fees, based upon a number of factors.

Q8: How does the Corps benefit? How are the fees used?

A8: The fees are deposited in a special Treasury account and later returned to the Corps for operations, maintenance and improvement of recreation sites and facilities.

Q9: How much revenue are increased recreation use fees expected to generate?

A9: A total of about \$4 million.

Q10: What does the Corps collect day use fees for?

A10. The fees are collected from visitors for the use of developed sites and facilities such as campsites, swimming beaches and boat launching ramps provided at government expense. Fees are not charged for the use of drinking water, wayside exhibits, overlook sites, picnic tables, toilet facilities or general visitor information. The Corps does not charge entrance fees.

Q12: Since the Corps is a major command of the Army, are retired service members exempted from paying fees or receive additional discounts on fees?

A12: No. There is no statutory provision for exemptions or discounts other than Golden Age and Golden Access discounts.

Q13: How will the proposed fees affect holders of the Golden Eagle Pass, Golden Age Passport and Golden Access Passport?

A13: There is no change. Holders of the Golden Age and Golden Access Passports will continue to receive a 50 percent discount on all use fees. Since the Corps does not charge entrance fees, the Golden Eagle Pass does not apply.

Q14: When will the new fees be implemented?

A14: January 1, 2003.

Q15: What are the scheduled fee changes for special event permits? When do they take effect?

A15: The basic fee to issue Special Event permits will increase from \$25.00 to \$50.00. Additional policy and fee changes are under consideration. These changes will be in effect for the 2003 recreation season.

Q16: How does the new day use fee schedule affect large groups?

A16: A maximum fee of \$4.00 per vehicle per day is charged for the use of day use facilities. If there are more than 8 people in the vehicle, an additional fee of \$1.00 per person is charged for all persons 12 years of age or older.

Q17: Why has the cost of the duplicate Annual Pass tripled?

A17: The initial cost of the duplicate annual pass did not reflect its true value when the price was set eight years ago. The price has been adjusted accordingly.

Q18: My taxes already pay for these services. Why should I have to pay again to use these facilities?

A18: Tax revenues paid for initial construction and support continued operations and maintenance expenses. Recreation use fees reflect the “user pay” philosophy, which recognizes that visitors who use the sites and facilities enjoy a greater benefit than other taxpayers and should pay a greater share of the cost to operate and maintain the facilities they enjoy.

Q19: Where can I find out more information?

A19: For more information contact your local U.S. Army Corps of Engineers office. A complete listing of Corps offices is available at <http://www.usace.army.mil/>.

Questions and Answers - Sensitive

Q1: The Corps has been charged with mismanagement of projects. Aren't these fees just another way of making up the costs?

A1: The Corps, like other public agencies, is always subject to public criticism and has come through a difficult period in its 225-year history with its integrity intact. The Corps' recreation program has always been highly regarded for good management practices. The fee increase reflects nothing more than the need to recover a portion of the cost of operating recreation areas and our desire to provide the best in customer service and better recreation facilities.

Q2: My family gave up its land for this lake, and my taxes have paid for these facilities. Why should I be charged a fee for the use of public property?

A2. Recreation use fees are based on a "user pay" philosophy. Tax revenues paid for initial construction and support continued operations and maintenance expenses. Recreation use fees reflect the "user pay" philosophy, which recognizes that visitors who use the sites and facilities enjoy a greater benefit than other taxpayers and should pay a greater share of the cost to operate and maintain the facilities they enjoy.

Q3: You're raising fees, but why do the recreation areas still look the same?

A3: In general, these increases are simply keeping up with inflation. As with most government agencies, however, the Corps has competing demands for limited budget resources. Fees are returned to the project where collected, and recreation areas with the greatest need will receive first attention.

DRAFT

Congressional/Executive Branch Correspondence

Honorable James M. Jeffords
Chairman, Committee on Environment
and Public Works
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Jeffords:

I am writing to provide you with an advance copy of a news release concerning an increase in special event permitting fees and use fees at many of the recreation areas operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, scheduled for January 1, 2003.

The Corps charges fees under the authority of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act for the public use of recreation sites and facilities provided at Government expense. Special event permitting fees are charged to recover the costs of the permitting process incurred by the Corps. Day use fees were first established under the authority of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993. A recent review of day use fees has revealed increases are appropriate as a result of 8 years of inflation and to ensure the Corps does not provide unfair competition to private industry providing similar recreation services.

Recreation day use fees are charged for the use of swimming beaches and boat launching ramps at recreation areas that have other facilities such as restroom, bathhouses, security lighting or picnic tables. Wayside exhibits, overlook areas, toilet facilities, picnic tables, general visitor information areas and visitor centers remain free-of-charge to visitors.

We will continue an extensive effort to inform our recreation visitors of the change in fees in advance of the recreation season. I hope this information is helpful. If you need additional details, please do not hesitate to contact my office. The point of contact is Mr. George Tabb, Acting Chief of Natural Resources Management, who can be reached at (202) 761-4827.

Sincerely,

Enclosure

Robert H. Griffin
Major General, U.S. Army
Director of Civil Works

Congressional Mailing list

Honorable James M. Jeffords
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410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Robert C. Smith
Ranking Member, Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
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Honorable Harry Reid
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation, Infrastructure, and Nuclear Safety
United States Senate
528 Hart Senate Office Building
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Honorable James M. Inhofe
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United States Senate
453 Senate Russell Office Building
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Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
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S128, The Capital
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Honorable Ted Stevens
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
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522 Senate Hart Office Building
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Honorable Harry Reid
Chairman, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
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129 Dirksen Senate Office Building
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Honorable Pete V. Domenici
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Honorable Jeff Bingaman
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364 Dirksen Senate Office Building
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Honorable Frank H. Murkowski
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
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322 Senate Hart Office Building
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Honorable C.W. Bill Young
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
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Honorable David R. Obey
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
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Honorable Sonny Callahan
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Honorable Peter J. Visclosky
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Honorable James L. Oberstar
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Honorable John J. Duncan
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Honorable Peter A. Defazio
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Honorable James V. Hansen
Chairman, Committee on Resources
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1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Nick J. Rahall, II
Ranking Member, Committee on Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
2307 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Gale Ann Norton
Secretary, Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Honorable Ann Veneman
Secretary, Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Honorable Mitchell E. Daniels, Jr.
Director, Office of Management and Budget
Eisenhower Executive Office Building, Room 252
Washington, 20503

DRAFT
PRESS RELEASE

Release No. XX-XX

Contact: Denver Beaulieu-Hains, (202) 761-0343

For Release: November 15, 2002

Embargoed until 15 Nov 2002

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will increase recreation day use fees effective Jan. 1, 2003. Fees for the issuance of special event permits will also increase for the 2003 recreation season. Over 375 million Americans visit Corps lakes for recreation purposes each year. One quarter of them come to fish. Others come to camp, hike, hunt and view wildlife.

"The Corps operates these facilities for the use of all Americans", said Maj. Gen. Robert H. Griffin, director of Civil Works, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "These fees will help us sustain the quality of our facilities for the enjoyment of our visitors."

Recreation use fees collected are used to help offset operating and maintenance costs at Corps facilities, to assure public demand for high quality recreation opportunities is met.

The new day use fee schedule for Corps operated recreation facilities is as follows:

- ?? A fee of \$1 per person, up to \$4 per vehicle, will be charged at developed swimming beaches, and a fee of \$3 will be charged for boat launching at ramps that have additional amenities.
- ?? A maximum fee of \$4 per vehicle per day may be charged for the use of all day use recreation facilities within a park.
- ?? An annual pass may be purchased for \$30 to permit the holder and accompanying passengers to use all day use facilities at Corps-operated parks for the calendar year. A second annual pass may be purchased at the reduced rate of \$15.00.
- ?? Golden Age and Golden Access passports will be honored. Holders will receive a 50 percent discount on all recreation use fees.
- ?? There will be no fee for children under 12 years of age.

?? The basic fee to issue a special events permit will be \$50.

In addition to the fee changes, the Corps is conducting a stringent review to ensure Corps recreation use fees are comparable to those charged by other providers for similar facilities and services in the local area. This is being done to assure unfair competition with private industry is avoided and may result in increased camping fees at some locations.

The Corps charges fees under the authority of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act for recreation sites, facilities and services provided at government expense.

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Public Information Brochure

A template for a tri-fold public information brochure is provided on the NRM Gateway. The template may be downloaded, modified to meet local requirements, and printed for distribution to recreation visitors. It is recommended the brochure be printed inexpensively, in black and white on plain bond to reduce cost.